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DAVID BEN JOSEPH KIMCHI.

[From Kalisch's History of Hebrew Grammar.]

David ben Joseph Kimchi was born in Narbonne about 1160, in the old age of his father. He is justly regarded as the greatest of Jewish grammarians, since he combined and enriched the labours of his predecessors, which he eagerly studied. He remained for centuries a never neglected mine of exact and minute observation; and the first grammars and dictionaries compiled by Christian scholars after the revival of learning, are substantially based on his works. Though he wrote also expositions of Books of the Old Testament, as the Chronicles, the Psalms, all the Prophets, Job and Genesis, which enjoyed a great reputation, and which by the liberality of their views entangled him in serious conflicts; he became immortal chiefly by his work *Michlol* (מכלול that is, *perfection*), which consists of two parts: 1. A Hebrew Grammar (חלק הרקדוק), usually bearing the general name *Michlol*; and, 2. A Hebrew dictionary (חלק הענין), or more commonly called "the Book of Roots" (ספר השרשים).

His chief merits are an extreme simplicity, free, from all artificial views or forced speculations; lucidity and brevity; and an abundant copiousness of materials. But it is impossible to overlook his serious defects. The principal reproach which even his warmest admirers must admit, is a singular want of order and system. The rules on the letters, the inflexion, and the Syntax, are most strangely mixed together. He begins with the verb, without even having touched on the letters, the vowels, or other signs. In introducing the first remarks on the regular conjugation, he mentions the anomalous transitions from one person of the verb to another; some rules on the *pausa* occur in the explanation of the preterite; they are connected with observations on the syntactical use of the plural for the singular, and *vice versa*; the participle בִּצְרָה (Hos. vii. 4), in which he regards the ה as paragogic, leads him to explain the nouns ending in ה paragog. (like לֵיָהּ) the ה locale, the ' compaginis and the ' of the construct state; and the plural of the participle induces him to discuss the irregular use of the construct state. Before the forms of the suffixes have yet been mentioned, he quotes the cases in which the suffixes or pronouns stand pleonastically; he mixes up the suffixes of nouns and verbs, and introduces many of their syntactical relations. Then follow successively remarks on the forms of the modifications, on the accusative as a complement of active verbs, and on the vowels of the preformatives before gutturals; and then on the servile letters, both with respect to form and syntax, but in almost endless confusion of arrangement. The instances, in which he supposes an omission of preformatives (ב, כ, ל, מ) lead him not only to the relative pronoun and the cases in which it is omitted, but to elliptic constructions in general, which naturally take him to important parts of the Syntax and even of Biblical exegesis; he next goes through the different modifications of the verb; and, in explaining Hithpael, and discussing the form הִזְבֵּן, he mentions incidentally the division of the letters in five classes according to the organs of speech. He then enters on the verb פָּ; and, as an introduction to the verbs פָּ, he explains the properties of the weak letters א, נ, י; in speaking of the form הִבְאִישׁ (Isaiah xxx. 5), he enumerates many cognate verbs (as טֹב and טָב), and the transpositions of letters in words (as כָּבֵשׁ and כָּשֵׁב), and of words in propositions (קָא to צָא). He then passes through the irregular and defective verbs, on the whole, rightly dividing the various classes, but desultory as regards the particular instances and mostly adopting the alphabetical order. He then comes to the second chief division of his grammar, the

nouns—and opens it with an exposition of the nouns, with their exceptions, crowding every variety of observations, without giving a single general rule to guide through the maze of words, after which follow the numerals in rather imperfect treatment. The third or concluding division disposes of the particles, which he explains, without classification, mostly in alphabetical arrangement, and among which he includes not a few pronouns.

But want of order is not the author's only defect. Many explanations are erroneous and prove an imperfect appreciation of the fundamental laws of the language. In fact, Kimchi is not conspicuous for originality or novelty of views; he has not attempted to master, by rational or philosophical principles, the materials collected by conscientious and discriminate observation; he has not succeeded in revealing the structure of the Hebrew language either by distinct laws or by a logical arrangement of details.

EXCAVATING THE NILE DELTA.

A society has been organized in England to excavate the delta of the Nile and has the approval of a great number of distinguished supporters. It is proposed to raise a fund for the purpose of conducting excavations in the delta, which up to this time has been rarely visited by travelers and where but one site (Zoan-Tanis) has been explored by archaeologists. Yet here must, undoubtedly, lie concealed the documents of a lost period of the Bible history—documents which we may confidently hope will furnish the key to a whole series of perplexing problems. The position of the land of Goshen is now ascertained. The site of its capital, Goshen, is indicated only by a lofty mound; but under this mound, if anywhere, are to be found the missing records of those four centuries of the Hebrew sojourn in Egypt which are passed over in a few verses of the Bible, so that the history of the Israelites, during that age is almost a blank. Pithom and Rameses, the "treasure" or stone cities built during the oppression, would richly repay exploration. The sites of the cities of the Hyksos, especially Avaris, would yield monuments of no less interest, bearing on Phœnician as well as on Hebrew history. It must not be forgotten that Naukratis, the primitive Greek emporium in the west of the Delta, promises as ample a harvest to Hellenic archaeologists as Goshen to Semitic scholars. The period which would there be illustrated is one of the most interesting in the development of Greek art and is at the same time one of the most obscure. Besides the sites connected with Hebrew, Hellenic, and Phœnician history, the Delta is rich in mounds of famous Egyptian cities, as Sais and Xoïs—this last being the capital of an early dynasty (the XIV), which is as yet wholly without written history. Yet more, it abounds in nameless tumuli and in inclosures of unknown origin, surrounded by massive walls, in the thickness of which sepulchral chambers are known to exist.

— R. Simlai once commenced his discourse in the following manner: Three hundred and sixty-five are the days of the solar year; this also is the number of the *negative precepts* given to Moses on Sinai: two hundred and forty-eight members are in the human body; and just as many *affirmative precepts* were given to Moses. For the purpose that each day and every limb may remind thee of one of the divine laws!—*Pal. Maccoth, fol. 23.*

— The Egyptian Museums (London, Paris, Berlin) contain almost as great a variety of ornaments for personal decoration (ivory, gold, silver), as are known to the fashions of modern life. They have been found in Egyptian tombs, pyramids and mummy-pits, and many of them must be as old as the age of the Pharaohs and the pyramids.—*Hackett.*